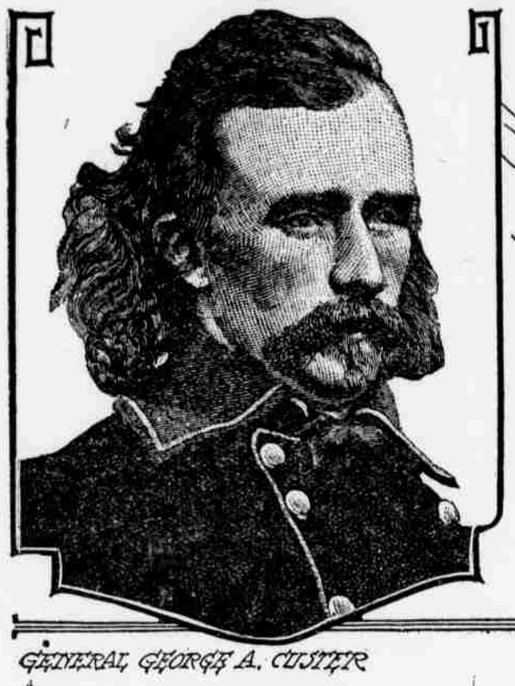
Rain-in-the-Face and Some Indian History



GENERAL GEORGE A. CUSTER

The foemen fled in the night,
And Rain-in-the-Face in his flight,
Uplifted high in air
As ghastly trophy bore
The brave heart that beat no more
Of the White Chief with yellow hair.
—LONGFELLOW.

By JOHN DICKINSON SHERMAN

THE foregoing verse is actually by Longfellow, though you may doubt it. Incidentally, it is worse history than it is verse.

Also in many books you will find the portrait of a good-looking Indian in savage finery and under it this caption, "Rain-in-the-Face, the Ogallala Sioux who killed General Custer"—of which more later.

Well, in Colonel Shields' recent book, "Blanket Indians of the Northwest," (Vechten Waring company, New York) is a chapter in which Rain-in-the-Face tells how he ran 300 miles on snowshoes in a blizzard in three days—by far the most remarkable run in all history.

Ugh, what a discussion that chapter has raised all over the West! For the West will never get through talking about Custer and the battle of Little Big Horn River, June 25, 1876.

Now, of course, anyone who has ever traveled on snowshoes and has been in a South Dakota blizzard has a positive opinion as to the truth of the Indian's story. Incidentally the world's record for a hundred mile run is 13:26:30. However, the story of Rain-in-the-Face serves a double purpose: It makes interesting reading and it has brought out some reliable facts concerning the legend that the Sioux chief boasted that he would kill Custer and eat his heart—and actually did carry out his boast.

According to the story told to Colonel Shields by the Sioux in December, 1873 or 1874, while quartered with a portion of his tribe at the Standing Rock agency, about 75 miles south of Bismarck, Rain-in-the-Face got into an altercation with four white men and killed two of them in self-defense, as he claimed. He was captured, taken to the agency, and thrown into jail, "a temporary, unfinished log structure without a floor." There were six or eight inches of snow on the ground that had blown in through the openings in the walls, and the prisoner's "only means of keeping from freezing was to keep walking constantly about the room." This cruelty to Indians was practiced on the orders of General Custer then in command at Fort Lincoln, near Bismarck. General Custer ordered that "if alive, Rain-in-the-Face should be thrown into jail and punished as severely as possible, pending the time when the court-martial could be convened and the culprit disposed of in a legal way. And this meant, of course, that he would be hung or shot." When this order was read to the prisoner, "Rain-in-the-Face swore vengeance on General Custer as the author of his sufferings. He swore that if he ever got out he would kill Custer in a hand-to-hand fight, if possible, and if not, then at longer range; that he would cut his heart out and carry it away as a trophy."

Some time before the Custer massacre, Rain-in-the-Face escaped from his prison with the assistance of two friends, who "handed him a pair of snow-shoes and a blanket in which a piece of dried buffalo meat was rolled." The buffalo meat fell out as he adjusted the blanket, and so he started out "into the desert, in the midst of a howling blizzard, at nightfall, with only one blanket, without a mouthful of food, without a weapon of any kind, when the temperature was probably forty degrees below zero and the wind was blowing thirty miles an hour." "He told me the story of his great run and I will tell it to you in his own words as nearly as I can recall them," reports Colonel Shields:

"I asked him, through an interpreter, 'Where did you go when you escaped from the jail at Standing Rock?' He said:

"'I went to the camp of my friends, at the base of Woody mountain, in Canada.'

"'How far is that?' I asked.

"'Three hundred miles as the crow flies.'

"'How long did it take you to make the run?'

"'Three days and nights.'

"'Do you mean to tell me that a man can run a hundred miles in twenty-four hours, on snowshoes, and another hundred in the next twenty-four, and another hundred in the next?'

"He said, 'I did it.'

"'How often did you sleep on the way?'

"'I didn't sleep at all. I knew I dared not sleep. I dared not even sit down to rest, for if I had, under the terrible fatigue and hunger and strain from which I suffered, I would have lost consciousness, a stupor would have overtaken me, and I would have frozen solid in half an hour. I was fleeing from the persecution, the wrongs, the outrages inflicted on me and my people by the white men. I was going to my friends and had determined to reach them. I knew the only way I could do that was to keep going. I ran most of the way. Occasionally I would slow down to a walk to recover my breath and recuperate my strength a little; then I would forge ahead again.'

"'What did you eat on the way?' I asked. He said:

"'Browse. When I would cross a dry coulee I would break off a handful of brush, willows or box-elder, and eat it as I ran across the next plateau, maybe ten miles, or twenty miles, or thirty miles. Then when I crossed another coulee I would break off more and eat that as I ran.

"'After running two days and nights and the greater part of the third day, late in the afternoon the wind lulled, the snow cleared from the air for a few minutes, and I saw the dim outline of Woody mountain towering away into the sky. That gave me new hope, new courage. I knew the camp was not more than twenty miles away, and I knew I should reach it. I put on a new burst of speed, and after running a few miles more the wind lulled again, the air cleared, and I saw the outline of the great blue forest that surrounds the base of the mountain; and I saw three little columns of blue smoke curling up among the trees.'"

The Indian told Colonel Shields, with equally substantial detail, how he found his friends, how they welcomed him, how he collapsed in their arms, and knew nothing for two days and nights.

D. F. Berry, official photographer and scout with Custer's forces, was at Fort Lincoln during the time Rain-in-the-Face was in jail there. He gives this "plain, unvarnished account" in the Wisconsin Times:

"In 1874, the Seventh United States cavalry was out scouting along the Yellowstone. Dr. Holzinger and a trader by the name of Baliran stopped to pick up some moss agates while the command moved on. A little later the horses owned by the two men came up to the command riderless. The scouting party started back to see what happened to Holzinger and Baliran and discovered they had been shot. They scouted around to see who had killed them but there was no trace of Indian or white man to be found.

"The next summer the Sioux Indians were holding a big war dance at Standing Rock and between the dances some of the warriors would get up in the center of the circle and relate some of the brave deeds of the band. A handsome young chief stepped into the circle and told the Indians how he had killed two men on the Yellowstone, shooting both. When he had finished he received great applause from the Indians. This Indian was Chief Rain-in-the-Face.

"Charles Reynolds, General Custer's famous scout, was present watching the dancers and heard the chief tell how he had killed the two men. The next day he returned to Fort Lincoln, the army post, located near Bismarck, on the west bank of the Missouri river. Reynolds told General Custer how he had heard Chief Rain-in-the-Face relate his deed. On the next ration day, General Custer sent his brother, Capt. Tom Custer, and 100 soldiers of the Seventh cavalry, together with some officers, to Standing Rock, to arrest the Indian chief for the killing of the two men.

"Captain Custer discovered Chief Rain-in-the-Face in the traders' store and with some soldiers grabbed the chief, wrested his rifle from him and ordered him to mount a horse. The party headed for Fort Lincoln, and upon their arrival there Chief Rain-in-the-Face was placed in the guard-house to await trial for murder in the spring term of the United States court.

"Two men who had been caught stealing oats and other grain from the government at Lincoln were also in the same guard-house awaiting trial at Fargo. Friends of the two grain thieves cut a hole in the guard-house to effect their escape and when the second was leaving he motioned to Chief Rain-in-the-Face to come. They made their escape soon after taps had blown and all lights were then out at the post.

"Rain-in-the-Face started towards Standing Rock, keeping away from the trail and traveling by night. When he reached his old camp the Indians started him for the hills for fear the soldiers would come and get him. A small party accompanied him and they later became known as Renegade Sioux. Their band increased until their number ran up in the thousands. The next time Rain-in-the-Face met Captain Custer was June 25, 1876, on the Little Big Horn river, in Custer's fight. Contrary to reports Chief Rain-in-the-Face did not hate General Custer, but liked him and his wife. They often talked with him while he was in the guard-house. However, the chief did hate the general's brother and sought vengeance against him.

"At one time I asked the chief if he had seen Captain Custer and he remarked that he had looked for and had found him. The Indians told me that the chief had mutilated the captain after the big battle. Tom Custer's heart was not cut out as the reports have it. General Benteen stated in a letter to me that he would make an affidavit to that effect. General Benteen and Doctor Porter were the two men who identified him. Captain Custer's body was horribly mutilated."

"There was no blizzard the night Rain-in-the-Face made his escape," Mr. Barry declares further. "I hesitate to comment, knowing Mr. Shields very well, but historians will grab such stuff as this and pass it on as authentic.

Doane Robinson, secretary and superintendent of the department of history of the State of South Dakota, writes to the Literary Digest:

"When Rain-in-the-Face lay dying at his home on Grand river, South Dakota, he was constantly attended by Miss Mary C. Collins, the very notable missionary, who was a doctor of medicine as well as of souls. He professed great remorse for the sins of his life, particularly his sins of mendacity, and confessed that it had been a great satisfaction in his sinful career to invent whoppers for the edification of the whites.

"1. There is no record that Rain-in-the-Face killed two men at Standing Rock agency in 1873-4. The offense which got him in bad with the military was the killing of Holzinger, the veterinarian, and Baliran, the sutler of General D. S. Stanley's expedition to the Yellowstone. This occurred on August 4, 1873.

"2. The next winter Rain-in-the-Face appeared at Standing Rock agency and boasted of the murders he had committed. Word was sent to Fort A. Lincoln, and Captain Tom Custer, brother of General George A., went down to Standing Rock to apprehend the culprit. He found him trading in the sutler's store, and slipping up behind him threw a blanket over the Indian's head and leaping upon him soon had him securely bound and took him a prisoner to Fort A. Lincoln. Whatever vengeance Rain-in-the-Face was harboring at this time was against Captain Tom and not against the general.

"3. Rain-in-the-Face escaped from the prison. I am not informed of his whereabouts during his freedom; he may have taken himself to Woody Mountain. If so, it was not nearly 'three hundred miles as the crow flies.'

"4. Rain-in-the-Face took no part in the Battle of the Little Big Horn, on June 25, 1876. He was away during the entire day, but returned that evening.

"5. The body of General Custer was not mutilated, nor was that of Captain Tom, whose heart Rain-in-the-Face had vowed to eat. If he ate anybody's heart that night, it was not that of either Custer."

WASHINGTON SIDELIGHTS

"In Time of Peace Prepare for War!"

WASHINGTON.—A big United States army—potential and not actual—is what the war experts are striving for. Two lessons of the World war, learned at heavy cost, are sharply emphasized in a War department bulletin giving the first official picture of the new national defense structure projected in the reorganized army of the United States.

One lesson comes direct from the battlefields of France. It is that efficient staff work is vital to modern military operations, and with it goes the contention that staff functions cannot be learned over night.

The other comes from the wartime din and confusion of the centralized training camps at home. It is that efficient mobilization of the nation's fighting strength can be carried out only as a decentralized process through agencies set up in times of peace.

Realization that these lessons must be worked into the new military policy, if perilous delay and costly confusion which preceded past mobilizations were to be avoided, has marked the effort of the War department. The bulletin shows it has attempted to write regulations under the revised national defense act that would furnish a clean-cut scheme for war mobilization without violating national traditions against militarism or creating machinery that would impose heavy burdens in peace times upon the taxpayers.

The project undertaken probably is the most far-reaching military effort the nation has ever attempted in peace times.

The foundation work has been done. All over the country decentralized machinery is being set up capable, its designers believe, of getting the nation on a war footing with little delay and confusion. The most important links in the new defense chain are the regular army, the National Guard and the Officers' Reserve corps.

Col. John Palmer, assigned to aid congress in framing the legislation, has devoted himself to a study of the subject. His work now is to go to all parts of the new army and explain the workings of the new plan.

When Doctors Disagree — Poor Bill!

WITH the resumption of tariff hearings by the senate finance committee, congress will settle down for an all-winter grind on the revision of customs laws. Although February 1 has been fixed as the date to which the emergency tariff will be extended, no one seems to believe that congress will complete the enactment of permanent tariff legislation by that date. The date, February 1, was selected admittedly with a view to speeding up the progress of the permanent bill. When that date arrives congress undoubtedly will pass a bill again extending the time of the emergency tariff.

The radical departure determined upon in the American valuation plan, which contemplates the abandonment of the policy of assessing import duties on the foreign invoice value, followed by the United States practically all the time for more than a century, has been the primary cause of the slow progress made in revising the tariff law.

The American valuation plan is becoming more and more to be the storm center of pending tariff legislation so far as business interests throughout the United States are concerned.

Republican members of the senate committee already have gone so far as to approve definitely the American valuation plan, a substitute provision having been framed in place of the section of the house bill covering this subject. The substitute plan also has been concurred in by Republican members of the ways and means committee, so that as the situation now stands the Republican majority in both committees are so far committed to the principle that there seems no likelihood of its abandonment at any later stage in the proceedings.

Banks Sound, With Resources Decreased

COMPARATIVE statement of the condition of reporting banks, as shown by the last bank call, is made by Comptroller of Currency Crissinger. It shows that the banking system is sound, although there has been a reduction of $3,390,269,000 in resources since June, 1920. The aggregate resources of the 30,815 reporting banks are $49,688,839,000.

The number of reporting banks include 8,154 national banks with resources, including rediscounts, of $20,517,862,000; 13,875 state banks with resources of $14,199,099,000; 623 mutual savings banks with resources of $6,040,121,000; 978 stock savings banks with resources of $557,910,000; 1,477 loan and trust companies with resources of $8,298,541,000; and 708 private banks with resources of $175,306,000.

"The total resources of the 8,154 national banks on June 30, 1921, including rediscounts of $879,416,000, were $20,617,862,000, a reduction during the year of $2,893,991,000," the comptroller reports. "Loans and discounts, which include paper rediscounted, acceptances and letters of credit, amounted to $12,242,802,000, compared with $14,085,056,000 on June 30, 1920.

"The investments of these banks amounted to $4,025,081,000, a decline during the year of $161,384,000.

"Due to a reduction in the deposits in national banks, their lawful reserve in federal reserve banks was reduced during the year $205,028,000, the amount of reserve on June 30, 1921, being $1,040,205,000. The cash in the vaults of these banks on June 30 was $374,349,000, or $76,002,000 less than the amount reported June 30, 1920."

Individual deposits, including postal savings, but exclusive of United States deposits to the amount of $249,039,000, were $12,742,281,000, or $1,393,332,000 less than the amount reported June 30, 1920.

Cleverest Men in Congress in Gallery

THE most clever men about congress are those who have their seats in the galleries. The galleryites are the regulars who are on hand to observe. Most of them are paid for their observations and are professionals at it. The "lobbyist" has long since been deceased in Washington. In this day of advancement in things political we have "legislative agents." They are perfectly legitimate workers. These legislative agents are "master minds." They are clever men, most of them conceded to be more clever than the men with whom they are working.

Foremost in the ranks of the legislative agents at the present time is Wayne B. Wheeler, general counsel for the Anti-Saloon league. So far as congress is concerned, Wheeler is the Anti-Saloon league.

Alfred P. Thom, a lawyer, represents the cause of the railroads before congress, as a rule. Thom is the Washington representative of the American Association of Railway Executives.

Benjamin C. Marsh carries the title of legislative agent for the National Farmers' council and sundry kindred organizations. He appears before every committee that will hear him.

Charles Lyman, secretary of the American board of farm organizations, appears before congressional committees with a rapid-fire line of argument.

Edgar Wallace, the little Welshman who bears the title of legislative agent for the American Federation of Labor, is a retiring individual. When labor's cause needs some good, strong oration, Frank Morrison is sent to do the job. When labor needs legal arguments, Jackson Ralston comes up on the hill.

These are but a few of the men who work with and on congress. There are 100 or more of them in Washington.